

**Middle Tennessee State University
School of Nursing
Graduate Program Admission, Progression & Retention Policy**

The Middle Tennessee State University School of Nursing has one graduate degree seeking program. Tracks in this program include the Family Nurse Practitioner (FNP) and Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner (PMHNP) options. The School of Nursing also offers a Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner (PMHNP) Post-Masters Certificate option.

The School of Nursing admissions standards apply to MSN degree-seeking students and Post-Master's Certificate students. This policy applies to graduate students beginning or being readmitted to the graduate program Fall 2016 or later.

Admission/Readmission

To consider enrollment in the MTSU MSN program, students must meet the following requirements:

1. Reside in the state of Tennessee
2. Have and maintain an unencumbered RN license in Tennessee
3. Hold a bachelor's degree in Nursing with an overall GPA of at least 2.9 on a 4.0 scale
4. If transferring, have a MSN overall GPA of at least 2.9 on a 4.0 scale and be in good standing at previous nursing program
5. Make application and be accepted to Middle Tennessee State University
6. Make application and be accepted to *MTSU Graduate Studies*
7. Meet the conditions of admission to the School of Nursing and choose a program track of interest.

An admission status will be assigned to those students who have a complete admission packet and have an overall GPA of at least 2.9 on a 4.0 scale by the School of Nursing Admissions Committee.

Students who do not have a GPA of at least a 2.9 on a 4.0 scale will not be considered for admission.

The School of Nursing utilizes the following admission status:

1. Full admission
2. Conditional admission
3. Non-degree seeking

Full Admission

Students who have a 3.0 or greater GPA in undergraduate or graduate work at the time of application and meet all requirements of admission will be accepted into the program under a full admission status. Students will receive notification of the admission via MTmail after the Admissions Committee meeting.

Conditional Admission

Students who have a 2.9 to 2.99 GPA on a 4.0 scale in undergraduate or graduate work at the time of application and meet all requirements of admission accepted into the program under a conditional or 'probational' status. Students will receive notification of the admission including conditions of admission via MTmail after the Admissions Committee meeting.

The following conditions must be met for admission status to be converted to a "full admission".

The student admitted with a conditional status must:

1. Maintain a 'B' or above in all courses for the first 12 credit hours of coursework.
2. Meet any other conditional admission requirements set by the Admissions Committee on a case by case basis.

Since the conditional admission process serves as a probationary period for new admissions, a student who does not meet the requirements for conditional admission at any point during the first 12 credit hours of coursework will not be placed on probation.

Once the conditions of admissions have been met, a student will be awarded full admission into the MSN program. Once full admission status is granted, a status change will be communicated to the College of Graduate Studies.

Conditional admission students not meeting requirements of admission at any point during the probationary period will be dismissed from the program.

Non-Degree-Seeking Enrollment Status

Non-degree student admission is available to qualified applicants who wish to enhance their post-baccalaureate education but do not plan to seek a graduate degree. A limited number of graduate nursing courses are available to non-degree students.

Applicants requesting this status must be admitted to the MTSU College of Graduate Studies, meet the following eligibility criteria, and submit appropriate documents to the Graduate Nursing Academic Advisor. The School of Nursing Admissions Committee will consider each request.

Eligibility criteria for non-degree-seeking enrollment in the School of Nursing:

1. Reside in the State of Tennessee
2. Have and maintain an unencumbered RN license in Tennessee
3. Hold a bachelor's degree with an overall GPA of at least 2.9 on a 4.0 scale
4. Specify in writing the purpose of request which could include but is not limited to: completing pre-requisites when already admitted to another graduate program; coursework for professional development; coursework for transfer to another program.

Program Readmission

It is expected students attend classes each semester (Fall, Spring, Summer). If a student must interrupt their program of study or exit the program an Interruption of Program (IOP) Form must be submitted to the MSN academic advisor during the semester the request is made.

Readmission to the graduate program is not guaranteed. Readmission is granted on a space-available basis. Readmitted students fall under the current admission guidelines at the time of their readmission.

To be readmitted to the MSN program the student must:

1. Complete all readmission applications within the School of Nursing and Graduate Studies
2. Meet all general admission requirements for the School of Nursing graduate program
3. Update all required health records within the School of Nursing document storage account

Students wishing to change tracks in the program must go through the readmission process and be admitted into the specified track.

Students who are readmitted will follow the most recent academic policies in the School of Nursing.

Program Progression

The School of Nursing progression standards apply to MSN degree seeking students and Post-Master's Certificate Students.

Graduate students in the School of Nursing must:

1. Have a "B" or better in all nursing courses, and
2. Have a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or better at the end of each term.
3. Maintain current documentation within the School of Nursing document storage account

Specialty Course Exams

An average of 85% must be achieved on exams in all specialty course to progress in the program. Courses that require this average include NURS 6110-Advanced Health Assessment; NURS 6210-Diagnosis and Management I and NURS 6211-Diagnosis and Management II; NURS 6311-Psychiatric Mental Health Diagnosis and Management I; and NURS 6312- Psychiatric Mental Health Diagnosis and Management II.

Prerequisites

Prerequisites for nursing courses are to be met in order to progress. Refer to the MSN degree plan, relevant course descriptions and the graduate nursing advisor for guidance in course sequencing.

Repeating a Course

If a student does not successfully complete a nursing course with a “B” or better, the student may repeat the course **one (1) time only** without consequences. The course repeat must be taken in the next academic term. No other courses can be taken during the term. If a student is unsuccessful in the course a second time, the student will be dismissed from the program.

Only two (2) different courses in the program of study may be repeated.

Course Withdrawal

Students may withdraw from a single course one (1) time only.

Students with two (2) withdrawals from a single course will not be readmitted to the MSN program.

Only two (2) instances of course withdrawals are permitted without consequences in the MSN program. Withdrawing from one or more courses at the same time is considered one (1) instance of withdrawal.

Students with more than two (2) withdrawals from the MSN program will not be readmitted to the program.

Time to Degree

Policies and procedures regarding time to degree can be found in the Student Handbook of the Middle Tennessee State University College of Graduate Studies.

Reinstatement/Extension

Both full-time and part-time students must register for each term (fall, spring, and summer). Failure to register for any semester/term constitutes a lapse in the program of study requiring readmission to the program. See readmission requirements in the Graduate Program Admission, Progression and Retention Policy

Students who do not plan to register for a particular term/semester must complete and submit an Interruption of Program (IOP) form to the MSN academic advisor before completing the current term. Failure to submit the IOP will result in the necessity for reapplication.

Note that students may wish to submit a Stop Out form to the College of Graduate Studies and will need to fill out a readmission application form (without being required to submit any additional materials) before enrolling for the next term/semester. This will ensure that

the College of Graduate Studies has all current student information and will trigger the process required for re-enrollment.

Program Probation

The School of Nursing probation standards apply to MSN degree-seeking students and Post-Master's Certificate Students.

Program probation means that a student has not met the 3.0 GPA grade requirements for MSN students and is therefore subject to academic intervention. During the period of probation, the student is permitted to continue academic studies. The School of Nursing recognizes two types of probation (1) Academic and (2) Clinical.

Any student who meets a criterion for probation a second time will be eligible for dismissal from the School of Nursing.

A student may be placed on program probation who:

1. Does not meet the 3.0 GPA grade requirement in any semester

A student may be placed on clinical probation who:

1. Fails to adhere to the School of Nursing Honor Code or the ANA Code for Nurses; or
2. Demonstrates unsafe clinical practices as deemed by the course instructor and specialty coordinator; or
3. Fails to achieve a cumulative grade point average of 3.0 on a 4.0 scale in graduate courses at the end of each term.

Students who are placed on program probation must present to the MSN Academic Advisor a detailed Progression Plan that specifies actions and timelines to improve the likelihood of future success.

The submission deadline is one week prior to the first day of classes for the subsequent semester. The School of Nursing Admissions Committee will review each submission; failure to submit a Progression Plan could result in the student being withdrawn from all nursing courses for the upcoming term.

All students in the MSN program are monitored each semester for progression and retention. Necessary action will be taken each semester depending on student grade reports.

Academic and Professional Misconduct

Students enrolled in the nursing program at MTSU will be held accountable for the provisions as stated by the Student Code of Conduct. As with the Nursing Student Honor

Code, the Student Code of Conduct is based upon and demands the values of truth, integrity, and ethical behavior within academic and professional settings. Professional settings include those places in which a nursing student is functioning as a representative of the SON and MTSU, on or off campus. Failure to adhere to the provisions of academic and professional conduct of the Student Code of Conduct shall be deemed as misconduct, resulting in academic and/or disciplinary consequences up to and including dismissal from the nursing program. Academic and professional misconduct would include, but is not limited to, the following:

1. Plagiarism. The adoption or reproduction of ideas, words, statements, images, or works of another person as one's own without proper acknowledgment.
2. Self-Plagiarism. The US Department of Health and Human Service Office of Research Integrity defines Self-Plagiarism as follows: "Redundant publication has a direct counterpart in the area of academic dishonesty-it is referred to as 'double dipping'. It occurs when a student submits a whole paper or a substantial portion of paper to fulfill a course requirement, even though that paper had earlier been submitted to satisfy the requirements for another course taught by a different professor. Many college undergraduates and even some graduate students are not aware that this type of practice is a serious offense and constitutes plagiarism".

Source: US Department of Health and Human Services, National Institutes of Health Office of Research Integrity. (2013). Academic self-plagiarism (double dipping). Retrieved from (link opens in a new window): <https://ori.hhs.gov/plagiarism-13>

3. Cheating. Using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information, or study aids in any academic exercise inclusive of online work. The term academic exercise includes all forms of work submitted for credit or hours. Cheating includes but is not limited to receiving or providing answers on a written exam, storing any data within a calculator prior to or during an exam for use in providing responses to an exam, giving signals of any kind during an exam, sending and/or receiving text messages via cell phone with regard to answers to an exam, the procurement and/or distribution of an exam before or after it is given, including the use of cell phone camera options or copying computer generated assessments in order to reproduce an exam, and group collaboration on any independent assignment. Posting of forms, written papers, and exams to any free or paid-access social networking website(s) is strictly prohibited.
4. Fabrication. Fabrication or invention, either verbal or written, of any information or citation in an academic exercise. This includes, but is not limited to, falsification of any information provided to a faculty or staff member, clinical site staff and preceptors (class-related or clinical); for example, number of clinical hours or number of patient encounters.
5. The use or distribution of publisher test banks.
6. Facilitation. Helping or attempting to help another to violate a provision of the Code of Conduct.

7. Posting of confidential client or facility information from clinical assignments or experiences to any online forum or webpage is strictly prohibited, as well as a breach of the federal HIPAA regulations.
8. Any behavior that threatens the safety of self, fellow students, faculty, staff, or patients when operating in a student capacity, representing the MTSU SON.
9. Other forms of unprofessional behavior or conduct includes but is not limited to:
 - a. Tobacco use (smoking, E-cigarettes or smokeless tobacco) at clinical sites and/or in nursing student uniform
 - b. Purchasing of alcohol or cigarettes in a nursing student uniform
 - c. Tardiness (clinical, classroom, lab, or simulation experiences)
 - d. Interruptions or inappropriate talking during class
 - e. Intimidation of students and/or faculty or staff (angry, hostile, or violent behavior)
 - f. Use of cellphones or other electronic devices not approved by faculty in class or during online activities, quizzes or tests
 - g. Academic misconduct
 - h. Fabrication of data in class, clinical, Medatrax or other written assignments
 - i. Sleeping in class or clinical
 - j. Sexual harassment or inappropriate sexual comments
 - k. Use of vulgar, obscene, or disrespectful language towards patients, other students, faculty, or staff (social media sites, on campus or at clinical sites)
 - l. Any other behavior deemed by faculty as unacceptable

Any and all infractions of the Student Code of Conduct will be handled according to University policy as stated in the University Student Handbook of Resources and Rules. A copy of the University Student Handbook is available online via the official MTSU website.

Program Dismissal

The SON dismissal standards apply to MSN degree-seeking students and Post Master's Certificate Students.

Program dismissal means that a student is permanently excluded from the School of Nursing at Middle Tennessee State University. The School of Nursing Admissions Committee will make all decisions regarding a student's dismissal from the graduate program.

The School of Nursing recognizes two types of dismissal (1) Academic and (2) Clinical.

A notation of dismissal is posted on the student's permanent record within the School of Nursing. A student dismissed from the Master of Science in Nursing program in the School of Nursing will not be considered for another track. Upon confirmation of dismissal, the student will be withdrawn from all nursing courses.

A student may be subject to academic dismissal who:

1. Fails to achieve a grade of “B” or above when repeating a required course.
2. Fails to achieve a grade of “B” or above in all remaining courses, once a “C”, “D” or “F” grade has been replaced in the same or previous semester.
3. Meets the criteria for Graduate Studies probation a second time.

A student may be subject to clinical dismissal who:

1. Demonstrates a pattern of unsafe clinical practice in one or more courses
2. Has been previously suspended from and readmitted to the nursing program and meets the criteria for probation or suspension following readmission
3. Fails to meet the terms of the conditional admission

Appeal of Progression/Dismissal Decision

See University grade appeals process

<https://www.mtsu.edu/policies/academic-affairs-students/313.php>

Ethical/Professional Dismissal

Dismissal may occur because of:

4. Demonstration of a pattern of unsafe clinical practice in one or more courses
5. Use of mind-altering drugs or alcohol when engaged in any nursing activity in or outside of class
6. Evidence of any other disciplinary offenses (e.g. Academic Misconduct) as outlined in the MTSU Rights and Responsibilities of students.
7. Violation of the School of Nursing Honor Code
8. Breach of ethics or gross professional negligence

Failure to Complete

Once a student has begun taking nursing courses, he/she must complete all degree requirements within six years. Failure to complete all degree requirements for the MSN degree within six (6) years of beginning graduate nursing courses may result in dismissal from the program.

MSN Dismissal Process

The following process will be used for unethical or unprofessional conduct leading to possible program dismissal.

1. Course faculty contacts Director when faced with a situation or case that could possibly result in dismissal from the MSN program
2. Director forms ad hoc panel composed of three (3) nursing faculty with no conflict of interest
3. Panel will review documentation regarding case and hold separate hearings with the student and faculty member.
4. Panel will forward recommendation for dismissal/non-dismissal to Director with an explanation of the reasons for the decision

5. Director will notify student of the decision in writing

Students will receive a notification via their MTmail account and in writing via standard mail regarding the decision after the committee has met.

Appeal of a Progression/Dismissal Decision

If the student wishes to appeal a progression or dismissal decision, the student must notify the Director of the School of Nursing in writing within five (5) working days of the notification of the dismissal.

If the School of Nursing Director upholds the original decision of dismissal, the student may appeal the decision to the College of Graduate Studies.

Approvals and Updates

School of Nursing Graduate Affairs Committee: September 2015

School of Nursing Faculty: October 2015

University Graduate Council: November 2015

Tennessee Board of Regents: July 2016

Clerical Update: January 2017

Clerical Update: March 2017

Faculty Update: April 2017

Faculty/Clerical Update: June 2017

Clerical Update: March 2018

Update: June 25, 2020

Update: July 22, 2021

Administrative Update: August 12, 2021

Reviewed: August 15, 2022